

Working Together organisations' joint policy on reimbursement of expenses and involvement payments

In this document we are using the term **lay partner** to refer to patients, carers or members of the public who are involved in the work of the organisations listed on page 2).

Involvement means the planning and design of research or services. It does not cover participation in studies or clinical trials.

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1. Introduction

The Thames Valley and Milton Keynes Working Together group aims to have one payment rate across the regions they cover and to work towards the same systems for making and recording payments.

Members of the Thames Valley and Milton Keynes Working Together Group (<http://www.oxfordahsn.org/our-work/patient-and-public-engagement-involvement-and-experience/>) who agreed this payment policy includes:

- NHS England and NHS Improvement South East
- NIHR Applied Research Collaboration (ARC) Oxford
- NIHR Oxford Biomedical Research Centre (BRC)
- NIHR Oxford Health BRC
- NIHR Research Design Service (RDS) South Central
- Oxford Academic Health Science Network (AHSN)
- Thames Valley Strategic Clinical Network
- University of Oxford Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences (NDPCHS)

2. Principles of payment

We are committed to working with patients, carers and the public as active partners in our work and networks. (This specifically excludes practitioners and professionals asked to comment from a professional perspective.) We will provide for reimbursement of expenses and payment for involvement in line with current national policies including the new NIHR Centre for Engagement and Dissemination - <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/centre-for-engagement-and-dissemination-recognition-payments-for-public-contributors/24979>.

This policy sets out the categories of financial support for patient, carer and public representation and involvement to enable this to happen across the members of the Thames Valley & Milton Keynes Working Together Group.

We aim to ensure that adverts for lay partner roles and activities make it clear if payment is offered and that lay partners are given this policy prior to their appointment.

We will make internal arrangements so that reimbursement and payment are made as soon as possible; that the process is as simple as possible for the lay partner and that lay partners are given clear information on how to get assistance should they need it.

We will pay all lay partners at the same rate and comply with legal requirements as to minimum levels, whilst aspiring to at least the living wage minimum level. Virtual involvement will be treated as being equivalent to involvement in person.

We will not employ lay partners; they are volunteers of the organisation, even if payments are made.

We will endeavour to find the funds to reimburse and pay people who get involved at the preparation and design stage of work, before it is granted funding.

This policy relates to children and young people as much as it does to adults. However, it is good practice to get permission from parents or guardians before giving payment to a minor.

Payment of staff who act as lay members

In principle a project should not rely on staff acting as lay members, but they may on occasion be used in addition to other lay members who provide a more independent voice.

The staff who are also lay partners should only be involved in this way on work that they are not directly employed on. If they act as a lay partner outside of their normal working hours, they should then be paid as other lay partners are and reimbursed if they have made a special visit to the site or had to make special arrangements covered by the expenses policy. However, if their work as a lay partner is agreed by their manager to be within their normal working hours, they should not receive payment or reimbursement.

3. Levels of involvement

The Thames Valley and Milton Keynes Working Together Group has agreed levels of involvement [see Diagram 1]. This mirrors the NHS England approach to prioritising financial support for involvement.



Diagram 1: Levels of involvement

4. Categories of financial support

We recognise there may be times when involvement does not fit neatly into these categories, for example a lay partner may spend considerable time reviewing or writing project or policy documents, creating patient questionnaires, collating results and writing up reports in addition to reading papers and giving input to a board meeting. Guidance is given in the section on payment for time.

Category A – Membership [public meetings, general participation] – no financial support provided.

This applies to open access public meetings or surveys/questionnaires where participants choose to attend or participate. No financial support is offered.

Category B – Involvement [partnership work] – reimbursement of out of pocket expenses only.

This will be the usual arrangement for lay partners who are involved with work for an organisation in the Working Together Group providing feedback and lay perspectives e.g. being participants/delegates at discussion forums, events, workshops or focus groups.

Category C – Leadership – payment and out of pocket expenses.

This is a more active and accountable role than the examples given for membership (A) and involvement (B), requiring enhanced skills, expertise, greater time commitment, public accountability or involvement in decision making and/or delivery.

For example, lay partners on:

- Thames Valley and Milton Keynes Working Together Group
- ARC Management Board
- NDPCHS Research Committee

Or involvement in:

- co-design and co-delivery of large events and conferences
- co-production of organisational or departmental policy and programmes

Both of the above in-depth roles are characterised by lay partners playing a strong leadership role and actively leading/delivering part of the work programme.

If the participation of a lay partner expands over time, for example the nature of the involvement work increases or their expertise is required for multiple programmes, there should be discussion over whether the status of their involvement requires re-evaluation. Similarly, discussions should take place if the level of participation decreases, for example the programme changes and the person no longer feels able to contribute.

There should be a written agreement between the individual Working Together organisation and lay partner on what payments will be offered for a particular activity. It is recommended that record of this agreement is kept by both the lay partner and the organisation.

If a lay partner is involved in a multi-organisation meeting, the payment of expenses and/or their time will lie with the organisation that recruited and appointed them. If they are a lay partner for more than one participating organisation, they should take responsibility for negotiating whose budget is used to reimburse them in advance of their attendance.

Table 1: Payment guide

Lay partner involvement This table is offered for guidance only and may vary between organisations. You are advised to check in advance with the organisation you are working with as to what will be paid.	Expenses?	Payment for time?
Attendance at open or public meetings/ consultations and giving an individual view, no commitment required	No	No
Responding to questionnaires	No	No
Attendance at consultation events by invitation	Yes	No
Representation and participation at designated meetings (regardless of what the meeting is trying to achieve) where no, little or occasional commitment is required.	Yes	No
Evaluating and reviewing documents (unless this is part of ongoing role)	Yes	No
Helping to write documents (lay summaries, articles for a newsletter, patient information leaflets etc)	Yes	Yes
Participating in training necessary to carry out involvement work at the Leadership level. (This will be negotiated individually. Some training will enhance the lay partner’s CV and be very much for their personal benefit, in which case there may be less need to pay them for their time.)	Yes	Yes
Representation and participation at designated meetings (regardless of what the meeting is trying to achieve) where in-depth commitment is required; for example lay partner on Strategic Board over a 12-month commitment	Yes	Yes
Leading focus groups, workshops or conferences etc.	Yes	Yes
Chairing designated groups or meetings	Yes	Yes
Staff recruitment and interview panel membership	Yes	Yes
Giving presentations	Yes	Yes
Staff training (where the lay partner inputs into staff training)	Yes	Yes
Monitoring/evaluating services or mystery shopping	Yes	Yes

Lay partner involvement This table is offered for guidance only and may vary between organisations. You are advised to check in advance with the organisation you are working with as to what will be paid.	Expenses?	Payment for time?
Development and evaluation of tenders	Yes	Yes
Taking part as an active researcher e.g. by interviewing participants	Yes	Yes
Co-applicants in research funding applications	Yes	Yes
Disseminating results of research (incl. holding events within an outside organisation to publicise research or a given project)	Yes	Yes

5. Reimbursement of expenses for involvement

Lay partners involved in involvement (category B) and leadership (category C) roles may be eligible to claim the expenses listed below. Receipts must be supplied whenever possible. Lay partners should not claim expenses that are not listed in this policy without the advance agreement of the link researcher or the PPI staff member. It is the responsibility of this member of staff to approve expense claims and follow the process for reimbursement of expenses and involvement payments required by their organisation. If the lay partner has any questions or expects to incur expenses not covered by this document (including overnight accommodation), they should contact their link researcher or the PPI member of staff in advance of making any bookings or incurring any expenses.

Where a young person or child is involved and it is their parents who have incurred expenses to enable their involvement, it is the parents who should make the claim for their expenses to be reimbursed.

Personal vehicles

- Lay partners can use their own vehicles when necessary and will receive reimbursement for the miles travelled.
- Expected start point is the person's home.
- Rates of reimbursement are:

- Cars and vans – 45p for the first 10,000 business miles in the tax year.
- Cars and vans – 25p for each business mile over 10,000 in the tax year.
- Motorbikes and mopeds – 24p per mile.
- Bicycles – 20p per mile.
- Parking expenses will be refunded to the value of the ticket. No parking fines will be reimbursed.
- An additional 5p per mile will be paid for those bringing a colleague.

Public transport

- Standard class public transport will be refunded to the value of the ticket, and lay partners are encouraged to choose the cheapest fare reasonably available.

Taxi

- Can be used with justification e.g. multiple people travelling to same place, personal safety, disability or efficiency.
- A receipt is needed.

Carers and support workers

- We recognise in some circumstances lay partners need to arrange for carers/support workers to accompany them to a meeting, or to take over caring responsibilities while they are at a meeting.
- Working Together organisations will meet the reasonable expenses/costs of carer/support workers; we will cover the travel/accommodation/subsistence requirements of the carer/support worker who accompanies the lay partner.
- Where reimbursement is needed for carers/support workers, this will be agreed on a case by case basis and should be agreed in advance with the PPI staff member.
- For the avoidance of doubt, the carer or support worker is engaged by the lay partner and not by the organisation.
- Working Together organisations will reimburse actual expenditure based on receipts submitted with expense claims. The receipt should provide details of the carer's registration and/or professional organisation providing the care.

Office supplies and remote working

- Working Together organisations will try to keep any home office supply use to a minimum for the lay partner, in an effort to reduce the administrative burden. Lay partners can request hard copies of meeting papers etc. to be supplied to them
- Some public contributors will make use of home office supplies as part of their involvement with Working Together organisations. This might include use of a telephone or internet connection to join meetings remotely, printing out papers at home that have been sent via email and postage costs.
- Where public contributors participate in meetings remotely from their home, we will pay a standing allowance of £5 per meeting to cover the cost of telephone calls, paper, printing ink and paper, internet connection and other home sundries.

Meals and accommodation

- Generally speaking, we will aim to provide refreshments where appropriate. On the rare occasion that a lay partner is asked to be at a venue over a meal time where food is not provided, they will be allocated £15 for an evening meal and £10 for lunch. The purchase of alcohol or tobacco products will not be reimbursed.

6. Payment for time i.e. in addition to expenses as above

Payment levels and activities are to be agreed between the organisation and lay partners before involvement work begins. Payments may also need reviewing if circumstances change.

Payments can be declined or smaller payments requested. Payment does not relate to travel time.

Payment rate guide:

- All-day meetings: £300 - that require substantial preparation and / or responsibilities at the meeting.
- Full day meetings: £150 – to include all prep and follow-up
- Half day meetings: £75 – to include all prep and follow-up

Lay partners in receipt of State Benefits

Being in receipt of benefits should not constitute a barrier to involvement.

One of the biggest difficulties for people on benefits because of ill health or disability is that Jobcentre Plus offices can interpret involvement as readiness for work, whether or not payment is being offered. In addition, anything that might be deemed earnings or income by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs service (HMRC) or the Department for Work and Pensions – including involvement payments, vouchers or financial gifts – may put benefit entitlement in jeopardy. NHS England has developed a standard letter which explains clearly that involvement opportunities with NHS England are not an indication of readiness to work, or employment.

It is extremely important that all Working Together organisations work transparently and sensitively. Lay partners receiving any payments or incentives should be made aware that this may impact on their entitlement to benefits. Breach of benefit conditions can result in an individual's benefits being stopped. They should be given adequate time to get a full response from the support agency (details below) between expressing an interest and being appointed.

It is the responsibility of the lay partner and not the Working Together organisation to comply with the conditions of their benefits. A lay partner should also speak to their benefits advisor or Jobcentre Plus to discuss their individual circumstances.

NHS England has produced a template letter explaining the nature of patient and lay partners' involvement to JobCentre Plus and other agencies. There is also a confidential helpline provided by Citizens Advice Bedford which can help with queries. Contact: contractsadmin@bedfordcab.org.uk or 01234 330604.

For NIHR-funded research projects, there is a confidential free service also run by Citizens Advice Bedford. It is strongly recommended that lay partners in receipt of State Benefits are urged to contact this helpline to ensure that there are no adverse effects of their involvement work, prior to their involvement. Before they make contact they should be told which NIHR-funded project they are assisting with.

Lay partners wishing to contact the service should email (preferred): ced@nihr.ac.uk or telephone: 020 8843 7117. They will need to know which part of the NIHR the public contributor is involved with (for example, BRC, ARC, LCRN). For more information, see:

7. Responsibility of lay partners

If receiving any form of benefit, the lay partner needs to seek advice on what impact monies received from any Working Together organisation may have on their benefit allowance (see above).

Lay partners are responsible for related pension contributions, National Insurance and income tax.

Lay partners seeking reimbursement of expenses must provide evidence of expenditure in the form of a receipt or ticket and can reclaim only their own expenses and not for expenses incurred by other colleagues.

Lay partners should submit claims in a timely manner, preferably within three months after the event/activity that their claim refers to, but no longer than 12 months as after this time the claim will not be processed.

Where receipts are difficult to obtain (for example the use of Oyster cards or calls made on mobile phones) copies of bills or computer printouts with the relevant section highlighted can be accepted.

Lay partners should record details of when they make a claim and when they receive payment for their own benefit.

8. Responsibility of Working Together organisations

Organisations will ensure there is a record of agreement with lay partners of what is expected, which expenses will be covered and any payments being offered.

They will make payments to lay partners within six weeks of receipt of claims wherever possible.

Working Together organisations will at all times communicate openly and with integrity with lay partners regarding the terms outlined in this policy so that it reflects the value placed on the involvement of lay partners with our work.

9. Budgeting

INVOLVE has created an online involvement cost calculator which is applicable more widely than just for research. This also includes costs over and above those in the scope of this policy but which are useful to consider for embedding PPIEE into all organisations' work: <http://www.invo.org.uk/resource-public-involvement-in-research/>

10. Reimbursement of lay partner expenses

Reimbursement for expenses is not taxable.

It is strongly recommended that you encourage any lay partner in receipt of State Benefits to contact the relevant helpline (see above) to ensure that there are no adverse effects of their involvement work with you, prior to their beginning.

It is good practice to pay people on benefits (at least) their expenses on the day and for this reason you may prefer to arrange for petty cash. (You would do this across the board so as not to embarrass any individuals).

11. Payment of lay partners

This refers to payment for time which is in addition to the reimbursement of expenses

Payment for time is taxable and should be declared for tax purposes.

Once you have appointed the lay partner you can get their bank details and then complete the relevant payment form. It should be noted that this may require additional details from the claimant such as their national insurance number.

It is strongly recommended that you encourage any lay partner in receipt of State Benefits to contact the relevant helpline (as above) to ensure that there are no adverse effects of their involvement work with you, prior to their beginning.

You will have made clear to the lay partner from the advertisement what, if any, payment is available. This will be based on what you budgeted for when you made your funding application.

Lay partners are also responsible for their own related pension contributions, National Insurance and income tax.